

Minutes of a meeting of the Operational Services Committee
held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on
Monday 14th June 2021 at 4:30pm

P R E S E N T

Cllr David Ambrose Smith (Chairman)
Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith
Cllr Victoria Charlesworth
Cllr Matthew Downey (As a Substitute)
Cllr Lis Every
Cllr Julia Huffer
Cllr Mark Inskip
Cllr Joshua Schumann
Cllr Paola Trimarco
Cllr Jo Webber
Cllr Christine Whelan

OFFICERS

Lewis Bage – Communities & Partnerships Manager
Jo Brooks – Director Operations
Maggie Camp – Legal Services Manager
Caroline Evans – Democratic Services Officer (Committees)
Richard Kay – Strategic Planning Manager
James Khan – Head of Street Scene
Liz Knox – Environmental Services Manager
Angela Parmenter – Housing & Community Safety Manager
Shona McKenzie – Community Safety Officer
Adrian Scaites-Stokes – Democratic Services Officer

OTHERS PRESENT

Nigel Ankers – Finance Officer, East Cambs Street Scene
Granville Hawkes - Voluntary Community Action East
Cambridgeshire

The Chairman welcomed Councillors Joshua Schumann and John Trapp as new Members of the Committee.

3. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

4. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John Trapp and Councillor Matthew Downey substituted for him for this meeting.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interests were made.

6. MINUTES

In reference to the minutes of 22nd March, under minute 74 third paragraph, it was agreed to amend the wording to read “The Director of East Cambs Street Scene” instead of “The Director Operations”.

In reference to the minutes of 29th April, under minute 2, it was agreed to amend the minutes to state that Councillor Christine Whelan nominated Councillor Mark Inskip as Vice Chairman, seconded by Councillor John Trapp.

It was resolved:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 22nd March 2021 and 29th April 2021, as amended, be confirmed as correct records and be signed by the Chairman.

7. CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcement:

The Cambridgeshire Energy on Action Partnership had awarded £1million to East Cambridgeshire. This would provide funding to improve the energy efficiency to 50 park homes, 10 private properties and 46 Sanctuary properties for East Cambridgeshire. In addition to this the Council were working with the Greater South East Energy Hub with regard to further funding LAD2, that would enable the installation of efficiency measures to 22 more properties.

8. VOLUNTARY COMMUNITY ACTION EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE UPDATE

The Committee received a presentation by Mr Granville Hawkes, of Voluntary Community Action East Cambridgeshire (VCAEC).

The Communities & Partnerships Manager reminded the Committee that it had agreed, in November 2020, to a Service Level Agreement for 2021/22 with VCAEC. It had also agreed that VCAEC would attend this Committee three times per year to give updates on how the services were progressing. Mr Hawkes was then introduced.

Mr Hawkes explained that he was the Product and Development Manager for VCAEC and was in his ninth year working for that organisation. VCAEC had originally been the Council’s voluntary service and the Ely Volunteer Centre, which had amalgamated. During a normal year, VCAEC would deal with between 20,000 and 25,000 volunteers’ hours, which gave opportunities to support the community. Last year was different due to the COVID pandemic. The COVID impacts accounted for some costs not being incurred and some extra sources of income.

The Volunteer Centre looked for opportunities to fill gaps in other services and attracted volunteers, who were interviewed so they could be matched to the appropriate organisations. Current projects included the East Cambs Car Sharing scheme, which had 25 volunteer drivers covering around 125,000 miles

per year, and the Gardening Team. Other community support was given to help with fund raising, financial advice and administration help. This resulted in approximately £300,000 going back into the community, but that would be limited without the support of this Council.

Looking forward, VCAEC wished to build on the work of other organisations and build on their legacy. Currently a new website was under construction, where other groups could advertise and encourage others to come forward. An East Cambs Community Support group would be set up. A target would be set to attract 100 people within East Cambridgeshire to volunteer, to put themselves forward when needed in case VCAEC was stuck for volunteers if anything COVID-like hit again. A few volunteers had already shown interest and social media would be used to attract more.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr Hawkes stated that VCAEC also communicated via letters and press releases and had other ways to get messages out. The Car Sharing scheme had 900 users. A database was kept of other groups and charity shops in Ely were visited to see if they wanted help. Once the website was up and running it would be used for ongoing communication. Parish Councils were a key link in the chain and could be used to co-ordinate and support events, such as for the Ely Litter Group.

9. SERVICE PRESENTATION – ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

The Committee received a presentation by the Environmental Services Manager on the work of the Council's Environmental Services.

The Environmental Health Officers covered a wide remit of jobs and had experience, enthusiasm and adaptability. This was significant due to changing legislation and public expectations. The Department consisted of four different teams, Domestic, Commercial, Care and Repair, Licensing.

Domestic Team

They had responsibility for investigations and enforcement in a domestic setting. Nuisance was a tricky subject due to people's perception, so the team had to prove it was a statutory nuisance relating to noise, light and smell issues. Noise issues could be monitored, by residents where required, before action could be taken.

The team also had to undertake inspections of Houses in Multiple Occupation, as there were 23 such licensed premises. These were regularly inspected so that steps could be taken to ensure they were up to standard. Other inspections include the 10 caravan sites in the district, which were checked annually. Inspections were also triggered if the Council received a complaint from a tenant. This was made more challenging due to COVID issues, so tenants were asked to supply any photographs of the problems.

Other work covered by the team included air quality testing, dealing with contaminated land, stray dogs, boarding establishments and fly tipping. During the COVID pandemic there had been a significant increase in fly tipping and 5 fixed penalty notices had been issued with 2 cases being looked at.

Commercial Team

The district had 880 registered food premises and this team had to inspect them to ensure food safety standards were maintained. The processes used by these premises were also checked to help maintain health standards, supported by Health and Safety inspections. As well as the usual routine inspections, other inspections were carried out in reaction to any reported incidents. Any priority based projects were dealt with alongside the Health and Safety Executive. The team had a good working relationship with Public Health.

Care & Repair

This service provided grants to residents to assist with adapting their homes or moving to a more suitable premises. Top up loans were also given for work costing over £30,000, and these mostly related to adaptations for children. The service had a good relationship with Sanctuary, who provided 40% of the funds when adapting any of their properties.

Miscellaneous Matters

The Department provided advice through the Safety Advisory Group, looked to help provide an integrated health advice service so people could be directed to relevant medical and health care services. It was also involved with the Recycling in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough waste partnership.

Impact of COVID

New regulations and guidance had been issued, mainly for licensed premises and the retail sector, as a consequence of the pandemic. This meant that, for track-and-trace purposes, the Department had to do door-knocking to gain information to create a list of relevant premises' contacts. There had been a small number of workplace outbreaks of the virus, though this was more the result of people's social life rather than at work, as most workplaces had adhered to the guidance. Some inspections had been targeted at certain places, to ensure they kept to the guidance and to keep control. Good communication had also help keep transmissions low.

During the COVID period the number of complaints had increased. Because people had been in lockdown, at home, this had led to a lot of complaints relating to dogs. It was anticipated that there would be more issues once life got back to something like normal.

In response to Members' queries, it was revealed that a survey had just been run to see how the pandemic had affected young people in the district. The information from that would be passed to the Health Partnership and fed into the relevant groups.

The Committee thanked the Environmental Services Manager for all the hard work of her teams and appreciated that only about half of what they actually did had been covered in the presentation.

10. ECDC ENVIRONMENT PLAN AND CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (JUNE 2021 EDITION)

The Committee considered a report, W28 previously circulated, which reviewed the fully refreshed Environment Plan.

The Strategic Planning Manager advised the Committee that the purpose of the report was to look back at the last twelve months to see what had been achieved and to look forward to actions for the next twelve months and beyond.

Solid progress had been made, with the most important aspect being the momentum generated. The Council was now in a position to push forward and take more steps. New targets were proposed, which were evidence based, had reasons set out for their inclusion and explained how they could be achieved. A new set of top twenty actions had been listed for the next twelve months and were even more comprehensive and ambitious than last year.

Tackling emissions would be a team effort and everyone had to do their bit. Officers had to contribute, as this was a key to building momentum. To aid this, more direct staff resource would be needed, hence the recommendation for a new staff member.

In response to Members' queries, the higher level of emissions in this district compared to the national average could be due to the level of commuter travel. In terms of the Council's own emissions, these were dominated by the Council's waste collection vehicles, though the use of alternative vehicles was being investigated to reduce their carbon footprint. Although a target of 2030-35 had been set for alternative vehicles, if this could be achieved earlier then it would be.

A Member explained that Cambridgeshire had a difficult rural/urban split, meaning to some degree it had less of a carbon impact as industry within the area was not carbon heavy. By far the most significant contributor to the county's significant carbon footprint related to traffic. This was a complex issue to resolve.

In terms of installing new electric vehicle charging points, the intention was not to limit electric vehicle charging points to one car park so other locations were being looked at. However, this issue was not as easy as previously thought. The relevant infrastructure had to be in place, there were technical reasons, such as power supplies, why some car parks would be difficult to use and retro-fitting was much harder than including them when new car parks were built.

It was acknowledged that, when calculating the Council's carbon footprint, getting businesses in the supply chain to provide emissions data for their products was problematical, and such emissions were largely outside the scope of the Council's control but hopefully, over time, supply chain information would become more readily available and this would then enable such emissions to be fed into the Council's carbon footprint calculation.

The additional staff resource was recommended initially as a part-time post, temporary basis, so its impact and value could be monitored. This extra resource should help achieve the proposed top twenty actions and, if proved adding real value, the post could be extended.

A handful of parish councils were interested in preparing their own Action Plans. Burwell Parish Council was a good example and could be used as a template for other parishes. Much would also depend on what resources the parish councils had. This could be put as a priority at the next Parish Forum.

Training, web-based by the Open University, had been targeted at staff and Members. It was module-based training and people could take a pick-and-mix approach.

The Sub-Committee thought the report had taken a considered approach, had not over-promised and should deliver on its targets. It would take time to achieve its goals but should aim to reduce carbon emissions as soon as possible. The whole of East Cambridgeshire had to be involved to maintain that momentum. The information from the Ideas Forum showed how, for some aspects, the public were unsure what it could or should do, so further education and advice would be helpful.

The Strategy and Action Plan had to be kept live and people engaged to meet the ambitious targets, which would be hard to attain. The Interim Targets were appreciated, as it showed the route that needed to be taken. The report included a lot of good things but more would need to be done each year to try and reach its net zero targets by 2040.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the Council's second Environment and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (as attached at Appendix A), be approved;
- (ii) That the actions taken and proposed by management, as set out in the Agenda Report at paragraph 3.22, which will strengthen the resource available and the skills base of staff to help implement the Action Plan, specifically endorsing the addition of a new Climate Change and Natural Environment Senior Officer to the establishment on a part-time, temporary basis of such a post be endorsed;
- (iii) That the publication of the Interim Recommendations of the Cambridgeshire-Peterborough Climate Change Commission be welcomed, and agree to work with partners to help take forward those recommendations wherever practical and viable to do so.

11. **SUB-REGIONAL LETTINGS POLICY REVIEW**

The Committee considered a report, W29 previously circulated, which included consultation feedback and the subsequent revisions to the letting policy.

The Housing & Community Safety Manager advised the Committee that the Home-Link Management Board, which included all the local authorities in the Sub-Region, had agreed the final draft policy. Appendix 2 to the report showed a good amount of feedback from the consultation and 79.99% of responders agreed with the objectives suggested. As a result of the feedback, there had been three significant changes to the draft policy. The first related to ex-partners having the same priority as the partners. The second related to changes to the

work area with people working in the district being regarded as having a local connection. Thirdly, applicants could be eligible for the housing register if they were in a preference group.

The housing register looked at applicants and the available lettings. It was a fluid register, as it was constantly being updated. During the COVID pandemic it had still operated and since January 2021 over 1000 properties had been available to let.

In reply to the Members' questions, it was revealed that there was a huge demand from 16 to 17-year-olds and, if they approached the Council, their circumstances were considered. A programme of sessions in schools explaining the consequences of becoming homeless had been carried out, to explain its hard realities. If this was not done then it could result in problems later on, so working with youngsters would continue. A recent change to legislation now allowed the Council to assist carers with their council tax payments. The Council could interpret the circumstances around anyone working on a zero-hours contract, to give some flexibility over the eligibility of their being on the register. The Sub-Committee asked that the relevant figures be sent out to Members and agreed with Councillor Mark Inskip's proposal just to 'note' the subsequent revisions to the letting policy.

It was resolved:

That the outcome of the allocations review, including the consultation feedback and subsequent revisions to the lettings policy, be noted.

12. **CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH AGAINST SCAMS PARTNERSHIP**

The Committee considered a report, W30 previously circulated, which looked at the Council becoming an official supporter of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Against Scams (CAPASP) and individual Member sign-up.

The Community Safety Officer advised the Committee that CAPASP was a county-wide organisation consisting of public, private and voluntary organisations and included a number of parish councils. A supporter of this partnership would be passed relevant information to prevent scams and would have access to new resources. Any individual Member signing up would also receive relevant information, regular newsletters and also have access to resources. If the Council signed up it would be the first district council to do so.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the benefits of the Council becoming a CAPASP Supporter be noted;
- (ii) That the benefits of Members becoming a CAPASP supporter and details of how to sign up individually be noted;

(iii) That the Council agrees to become an official supporter of CAPASP.

13. **QUARTER 4, 2020/2021 PERFORMANCE FOR THE WASTE AND STREET CLEANSING SERVICES**

The Committee considered a report, W31 previously circulated, which provided Quarter 4 performance information for the delivery of the waste and street cleansing services by East Cambs Street Scene Ltd (ECSS).

Councillor Joshua Schumann reminded the Committee that he was the Council's Observer on the ECSS Board.

The Head of Street Scene advised the Committee that the report covered the final quarter of the year. All collections had been completed satisfactorily with minimum disruptions. Services had been sustained and safely delivered during the COVID pandemic. It was also noted that there had been an increase in bulky waste collections.

Different methods of communicating with the public had been used, with advances in social media, and these would continue to be used. Two or three consultations had been released, which had sparked in-depth discussions. Work was also ongoing with Recycling in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (RECAP) to ensure there was a consistent approach to waste and recycling matters across the county.

The table under paragraph 4.1 of the report showed a high level of performance throughout the services, highlighting that all services had over-achieved. The table under paragraph 6.1 summarised the tonnage collected, which was heavily affected by the amount of garden waste being recycled at various times during the year.

The Finance Officer ECSS, presented the year-end accounts and explained that the work of the audit was still ongoing, so the figures might be subject to review. He highlighted that staffing costs were higher than expected, the replacement vehicle costs were due to an accident, but overall ECSS had made a small profit.

Following the Members' queries, it was explained that recycling rates for January had been affected by the delay in the wheelie bin stock delivery. An order had been placed early enough but the supplier had encountered problems, causing the delay. This was an isolated issue and procedures had been adjusted to ensure ECSS had sufficient stock.

There was no correlation between the peaks in staff absences and requests received in October, as it was just a coincidence. Absences had been seen during the winter and summer months but the staff absences did not increase just because the workload increased. All employees had 'dug deep' and worked hard to keep services going, as demonstrated by the performance figures shown.

All offensive graffiti was cleaned off in all cases and non-offensive graffiti on Council owned property only. If non-offensive instances were found on private land it was the responsibility of the landlord to clean it. ECSS did offer a service to clean it for them for a fee.

Receipts from an insurance claim for a replacement vehicle had not been included in the year-end figures due to the complications with it. This was more to do with the third party insurers, but it was hoped to recover those costs. It was a substantial case which was ongoing and there was no guarantee that the costs would be recovered, so it had not been included in the accounts.

During a normal year the employees would have used up their holiday entitlement. However, because of COVID the employees could hold over their holiday entitlement over the next couple of years. This had built up substantially over the year, so needed to be accounted for.

£77.6k of the £91k extra provided by the District Council had been used due to the additional costs associated with COVID, and the excess would be returned to the Council. The amount provided by the District Council was specifically for any COVID related issues, so the small profit was not included as it had come from elsewhere. Although extra revenue had also been received from additional recycling credits, this again was not related to the COVID issue.

The Sub-Committee acknowledged the good work being done with the community, for example working with the successful 'litter picks', and for the services' prompt responses to issues brought up. It was good to see that the service promoted its education programme and expected them to attend the Careers Fair to promote its services and jobs.

The results of the consultations could be shared with Members, but this would be after 4th July when the latest consultation ended.

The overall recycling rate of 56% was a missed target and was based on the dry recycling materials and garden waste collected. Between October and March there had been a massive reduction in garden waste, though during the first six months the target rate had been achieved or over-achieved. To address that situation education was key, to help reduce non-recyclable waste. So, there would be a big focus on reducing household waste. The waste analysis conducted previously showed that some recyclable materials were being put in the household waste, so people needed to be educated to correct that issue.

It was resolved

That the performance of service delivery, for the fourth quarter, be noted.

14. **ANNUAL REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

The Committee considered a report, W32 previously circulated, which set out the annual reports of Council representatives on Outside Bodies within the Operational Services Committee remit and sought to appoint a new representative to the Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee.

The Democratic Services Officer (Committees) advised the Committee that the report summarised the Council's representations with Appendix 1 showing the representatives appointed to the Outside Bodies and Appendix 2 showing their annual reports and further information about each organisation.

Councillor Lis Every was nominated, by Councillor David Ambrose Smith and seconded by Councillor Julia Huffer, to be the new Council representative on the Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee.

Councillor Mark Inskip was then nominated, by Councillor Matthew Downey and seconded by Councillor Christine Whelan, to be the new Council representative on the Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee.

The Committee agreed to decide the matter by a show of hands and when put to the vote Councillor Lis Every was duly appointed.

It was resolved:

- (i) That Councillor Lis Every be appointed as a Council Representative on the Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee;
- (ii) That the annual reports from Council representatives on Outside Bodies within the responsibility of the Operation Services Committee be noted (Appendix 2).

15. **ANGLIA REVENUES JOINT COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The Committee considered the minutes of the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership (ARP) Joint Committee of 8th December 2020.

The Chairman advised the Committee that the minutes were presented so that the Committee were aware of what was happening at ARP.

16. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

The Committee received its forward agenda plan.

The Chairman advised the Committee that due to a change in responsibility this Committee now had leisure services under its remit.

The Director, Operations advised the Committee that the report author for the report on Playing Pitches had requested an extension, so the report had been put back to September. The Review of the Housing and Community Advice Service would give details of the changes to that service.

In response to Members' questions, it was explained that the review of services had been not been completed, as the Management Team considered the Service Review and Appraisals would be too onerous for the services due to the extra work required because of the COVID pandemic. The intention was to re-introduce them as appropriate. The Director, Operations would inform the Chairman when they could be expected.

The meeting concluded at 6:45pm.

Chairman _____ Dated: 13 September 2021